

Ephesians 5:1-10

Ephesians 5:1-10 Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. (2) And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. (3) But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; (4) neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. (5) For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. (6) Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. (7) Therefore do not be partakers with them. (8) For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (9) (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), (10) finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.

Questions On The Text

What does Paul encourage us to do?

Verse 1: We are encouraged to imitate God. Chapter and verse divisions did not exist in the original New Testament writings, so the thought of the previous verse – exhibiting qualities that are God-like – is continued on. The “therefore” strengthens this connection. It is only natural to expect that children should imitate their Father. The word “dear” means “beloved.”

How are we to imitate God?

Verse 2: To imitate God, we are to walk in love. This is reasonable since God is love. (See 1 John 4:8.) Christ is shown to be the supreme example of love in that He sacrificed His life for others. (See John 15:13.)

What things should not exist among Christians?

Verses 3-4: There are several things listed here that should not exist in the Christian community. Fornication is all sexual immorality and includes all practices of sexuality not condoned by God. Uncleanness is sexual impurity and so goes deeper than physical actions. While “covetousness” means “greed,” it can also be used in a sexual context (see 1 Corinthians 5:10-11; Exodus 20:17).

None of this is appropriate for saints to indulge in. Paul’s use of the word “saints” to describe the Ephesians confirms that all believers are saints whether or not they are officially recognised as such by any church group. Also prohibited are sins of the tongue including: Filthiness (meaning obscenity, but can also include immoral behaviour); foolish talking; coarse jesting (dirty jokes, suggestive language). These are all to be replaced by thanksgiving.

Who will not inherit God’s kingdom?

Verses 5-7: Paul selects these sins from the list in the previous verses and gives the warning that practitioners of these sins will not inherit the kingdom of God. That they are merely representative and not meant to be an exhaustive list of sins that exclude people from God’s kingdom is clear from similar statements elsewhere. See Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.

Paul identifies covetousness as a form of idolatry (see Colossians 3:5). To believe that a person can continue in a lifestyle of deliberate sin and still enter the kingdom of heaven is to be deceived. These sins are the very reason why unbelievers will be judged. “Partakers” means “joint-partakers, sharers,” the same word as in Ephesians 3:6.

Why should believers turn from sin?

Verse 8: “For” connects this verse with the previous one and provides a reason for believers not to be sharers in the sins of the sons of disobedience. We are no longer in darkness, but rather we are sons of God and therefore children of light. It would be a contradiction in terms for children of light to behave like children of darkness.

How is the fruit of the Spirit described?

Verse 9: Depending on which Greek manuscripts are used, this could also refer to the fruit of the light. Either way, the fruit itself is described as all (every form of) goodness, righteousness and truth.

What is the result of walking in the light?

Verse 10: This verse is really a continuation of verse 8 which is why verse 9 is in brackets. “Acceptable” means “well-pleasing.” “Finding out” is literally “testing, proving, approving.” (The same word is used in Romans 12:2.) This verse makes it clear that we cannot discover what pleases the Lord through mere intellectual activity or theorising, but through walking in the light, actually putting into practice what we know, obedience.

Further Questions For Discussion:

What sorts of qualities does our heavenly Father exhibit that we should imitate?

Do you see evidence of the things in Paul’s should-not-do list in churches today?

What does it mean for people who claim to be Christians but continue deliberately in sin?

Why should children of light not behave like children of darkness?

Why is it necessary to walk in the light to discover what pleases the Lord?